



Councilmember

Julia Patterson

Metropolitan King County Council
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**YOU'RE INVITED TO A
TOWN HALL MEETING!**

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YOU'RE INVITED! TOWN HALL MEETING ON ELECTIONS

**Please join Councilmember
Julia Patterson, Secretary
of State Sam Reed, Elections
Director Dean Logan** for a Town
Hall Discussion on Elections.

When:

Thursday, March 31, 7-9pm

Where:

Kent City Hall 220 4th Ave S



Dean Logan "King County
Elections Director >
Dean Logan will discuss
King County's efforts to
improve elections"

< Secretary of State
Sam Reed has proposed a
series of state election re-
forms and will talk about them
at the Town Hall"



Election Reforms

King County Council
Compliments of Councilmember

Julia Patterson

Julia Patterson
King County Council

Dear Neighbors,

The 2004 General Election was historic in several ways. The race for Governor was the closest in the history of our state. Voter turnout reached an all time high of 83% and more citizens voted by absentee ballot than ever before. 139,000 new people registered to vote in King County.

These factors presented challenges to the King County Elections Department. The elections system is designed and run by people and therefore will be subject to human error. Nevertheless, we must strive to make our system as precise as is humanly possible.

Last month, in response to these challenges, I introduced comprehensive election reform legislation. Councilmember Kathy Lambert (R) of Redmond and Councilmember Bob Ferguson (D) of Seattle joined me in proposing these bipartisan reforms. The legislation calls for sensible safeguards for tabulating votes, the consolidation of election facilities, increased funding for election worker training, as well as recommendations for changes in state law.

On March 31st, I will hold a Town Hall meeting at Kent City Hall to discuss my election reform proposal. Secretary of State Sam Reed will also be present to discuss the reforms he has proposed at the state level. More details are inside this newsletter.

Sincerely,

Julia Patterson
King County

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Julia Patterson ELECTION REFORM

SENSIBLE ELECTION SAFEGUARDS NEEDED

I have spent the past several months meeting with county election officials and Secretary of State Sam Reed to discuss what went wrong with the election and how we can prevent it from happening again. I have introduced a number of proposals that I believe will improve the election system in King County.



Councilmembers Julia Patterson and Kathy Lambert collaborate on many legislative issues, including their recently proposed election reforms.

Seattle *PA*

"Patterson and Lambert suggest sound proposals, including a clearly distinct format difference between regular and provisional ballots and more money to train election workers." 2/3/05

The *Seattle Times*

"King County Councilwoman Julia Patterson offers several ideas that should fly through the council, including improved methods for handling provisional ballots, better training for election workers (and temporary workers) and locating all elections operations in one building." 1/30/05

CHALLENGES DEFINED

Some Provisional Ballots were Improperly Handled

- Federal law allows voters to cast a provisional ballot at a polling location if their name does not appear on the voter registration list. Procedures then call for provisional ballots to be set aside so election staff can determine their validity
- 348 King County provisional ballots were inadvertently inserted into voting machines before registration status could be verified by election staff.

Election Facilities

- The King County Elections Department operates out of three separate facilities. The department is not integrated or centralized, posing communication and operational challenges.
- Other large counties administer elections out of one facility.

Proximity of the Primary and General Elections

- Washington State holds the latest Primary Election in the nation, during the second week of September.
- Election officials are required to certify the Primary Election while, at the same time, they prepare for the General Election. This places tremendous demands upon staff and resources.

Human Error

- People run the Elections Department, build the ballot counting machines and staff the polling places, making our elections system subject to human error.
- We rely on volunteers, temporary employees and seasoned staff during the election season. Only 43 of the over 4,000 people that conduct a General Election in King County are full time workers.
- We must continue to develop and apply safeguards to minimize the chance of human error occurring.

Felons and Deceased Individuals Voting

- King County relies on courts to notify the Elections Department when a person is convicted of a felony and King County removes that voter from the voter list.
- Counties rely on the State Health Department to notify them when a county resident dies.

Absentee Ballots Inadvertently Disqualified

- 735 absentee ballots were erroneously disqualified because elections workers did not compare the signatures on the absentee ballot envelopes with voter registration forms, as called for by procedures.
- The State Supreme Court unanimously ruled that these valid ballots could be included in the final vote count.

PROBLEMS DEFINED

Provisional Ballots

- Require provisional ballots to be designed so they can be distinguished from standard ballots. This will prevent machine tabulation before the ballots can be verified.

Election Facilities and Operations

- Establish a space plan to centralize King County Election facilities into one building to minimize the opportunity for mistakes and improve public access for observing the election process.

Allow More Time between the Primary and General Elections

- The law should be changed by the Washington State Legislature to move the Primary Election back at least one month in order to allow counties additional time to administer the Primary and General Election.

Better Training of Workers

- Increase funding for training temporary and full time election employees to reinforce proper procedures in handling ballots, staffing polling locations and managing voter registration lists.

Preventing Invalid Voters from Casting Ballots

- In 2006, Washington State will consolidate the lists of registered voters into one list to better prevent felons and deceased individuals from voting.
- In addition, the State Legislature is considering legislation that would require all voters to present identification at polling locations.

Pilot Vote-by-Mail Election

- Conduct a special King County election entirely by mail to provide information on whether all mail voting is appropriate for future elections.
- Presently, nearly 70 percent of all voters choose to vote by mail. We administer two completely separate and different types of elections - one by mail, and one at the polling places.